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Make America Curious Again: Integrating Feminism into Undergraduate International Relations Studies

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The systems and institutions that exist in our country are strategically designed to maintain patriarchy and privileged masculinity. Complacency of the majority ensures that these structures remain intact. In this paper, I consider the exclusion of feminism and discussions of gender from undergraduate political science and international studies courses, and why it is critical for us to be paying attention to it now perhaps more than ever before. I suggest that this exclusion only helps to ensure that patriarchal dominance continues into the future. We have the potential to change by adopting a more curious mindset.

Nolite te bastardes carborundorum.
Don't let the bastards grind you down.
~Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)

Introduction

The current year is 2017. The bastards are grinding away and patriarchy is rearing its ugly head in the United States of America. The systems and institutions that exist in our

country are strategically designed to maintain patriarchy and privileged masculinity. Complacency of the majority ensures that these structures remain intact. However, since the middle of the 20th century, groundswells have been shaking these foundations. There are now a number of visible cracks in the walls and ceilings, rays of light shining through to remind us that there are opportunities for even greater change to take place. *We the people, of these United States,* just need to make a more conscious and concerted effort to do so. And how do we do that? We become curious and critical about the world in which we live.

These efforts must start, at the very least, in our higher education institutions. Colleges and universities are key sources of knowledge dissemination. When knowledge is withheld at the higher education level and patriarchy and masculinity are reinforced through teaching, our whole country suffers. This may seem like an extreme claim to make but, in reality, it is these institutions that are responsible for educating and preparing the next generation of American professionals. If this is what we teach, it will be what we practice. This cannot be underestimated, especially as we turn our attention to undergraduate political science and international studies programs. Graduates of these programs will go on to participate in government and lead of our country.

Over the last 30 years, feminist international relations (IR) and gendered approaches to foreign policy and national security have been gaining attention in both the academy and in government. In 2000, the United Nations Security Council formally acknowledged the importance of including women's experiences with conflict in security and peace decisions through Resolution 1325. There are currently 64 countries with National Action Plans on how they plan to integrate women, peace, and security into their domestic and foreign policy (Peace Women, 2017). On one hand, these National Action Plans are evidence of commendable progress. On the other, this progress is rather elementary and somewhat insignificant because many of the plans are little more than words on paper. Furthermore, a majority of the world's countries have yet to indicate any intention to pursue a National Action Plan in the near future.

It is easy to blame those in the federal government for failing to address gender equality in more meaningful ways. It is much harder for us to take a step back and consider how we, as citizens, have contributed to these failures as well. In this paper, I argue that one reason for patriarchal dominance in government ideology and practice is the exclusion of gender from undergraduate political science and international studies courses. I reflect on my unique journey as both a student and federal contractor, and why it is imperative that universities begin paying attention to feminist IR in security and foreign policy courses. I examine some of the divides that exist within IR academia through a sample of public, comprehensive colleges in New York State. Using knowledge from transnational feminists and feminist IR scholars, I explore and analyze some of the reasons professors provide for not integrating gendered perspectives into their coursework. I arrive at the conclusion that the absence of this knowledge from instruction is due, in large part, to a general lack of respect for feminist thought throughout the discipline. The purpose of this paper is not to debate the merits of different IR theories, but rather, to think critically about why feminist IR is not being included in security and foreign policy studies and the potential consequences of its continued exclusion. The paper ends with a call to action.

Key Terms

The purpose of this section is to provide clarification to readers from

diverse backgrounds on a number of discipline-specific Political Science and Gender Studies terms that I use throughout this paper.

International Relations (IR) is used to refer to the academic discipline that focuses on the interaction of actors in international politics. Theorists tend to focus primarily on the state.

Feminist IR is a subfield of IR that focuses on interaction of actors in international politics through a gendered lens with a primary focus on individuals and their experiences within the state.

Foreign Policy is defined as a government's strategy in dealing with other states (It is worth noting that "state" is used to refer to a country, whereas "government" refers to an administration. When governments change, foreign policy approaches and priorities change).

National Security is the concept that a government should protect the state and its citizens against crises. Sometimes this is achieved through displays of power, other times through peace.

Subaltern are people who are thought to be and are treated as subordinate, inferior, or of a lower rank. In this context, subaltern individuals are those who live socially, politically and geographically outside of hegemonic Western power structures.

Becoming Curious, Gaining Authenticity

My curiosity in feminist international relations began during the third year of my undergraduate studies. By simultaneously pursuing degrees in Political Science, International Studies, and Women and Gender Studies, I put myself in a unique position to consider the intersections of these disciplines. I loved studying feminist and political theory and found myself particularly intrigued by my National Security course. It became an exciting space where I could merge theory with practice, where I could analyze different threats to certain types of security (i.e. military, human, environmental, etc.) through the lenses of realism, liberalism, and democratic peace theory. When I returned in the fall of the following year, I started talking with a professor about the role of women in security and wondering what knowledge existed on the topic. To my surprise, and that of my professor, there was a whole school of thought and a number of government initiatives devoted to it. This discovery was both fascinating and frustrating. Fascinating because all of my interests converged in one space,

but also frustrating because I had not been introduced to any of it in my National Security or IR courses. I realized that we had learned about the effects of certain decisions on states, but we had not discussed the effects on individual lives in as much detail. We had debated a variety of international security issues, but considering who is and isn't allowed to participate in security decision-making processes wasn't one of them. And finally, I realized that we had read the theories of many prominent male IR scholars (i.e. Doyle, 1986; Fukuyama, 1989; Huntington, 1993; Waltz, 1995), but we hadn't even heard mention of any leading feminist IR scholars (Enloe, 2014; Steans, 2013; Sylvester, 2001; Tickner, 2014). This is where my questioning of undergraduate Political Science and International Studies courses began.

In search of what was missing, I started doing my own independent research on the connection between gender relations and state security. I was pulled in by Mary Caprioli's (2000) empirical research on gender equality and state conflict, studies (Anderlini, 2007; Gizelis, 2011) demonstrating that women's participation in peace processes leads to more sustainable peace deals, and the number of different perspectives offered by feminist IR scholars (Enloe, 2014; Runyon & Peterson 2014; Tickner, 2014). There certainly wasn't a shortage of knowledge to explore. I found myself particularly interested in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the subsequent National Action Plans and initiatives that emerged from it. Again, I was struck with fascination and frustration. I loved knowing that there was work being done to integrate women into conversations about peace, conflict, and security, but I couldn't help feeling that, over the course of more than 16 years, very little substantial progress had been made towards fulfilling the original charge of Resolution 1325.

Beginning in February 2016, I was fortunate enough to augment this research by working as an intern and then contractor for the U.S. Department of State. This allowed me to witness and take part in foreign policy decisions at the federal level as they were being made. I had the opportunity to analyze how the United States government was implementing its National Action Plan and to contribute to conversations about its quinquennial revision. I observed how women engaged in conversations about foreign policy decisions and the

incredible outcomes of granting them access to this work. I also learned about the unfortunate consequences that can result from governments excluding women from peace and security efforts. While working at the Department of State, my colleagues commented that it was uncommon for a student my age to be so versed in the details of the women, peace, and security agenda. They wondered if I had been taught about it in school; I wondered why I had *not* been.

After leaving Washington, D.C., for my final year of undergraduate studies, I reflected on all of the knowledge that my studies and fieldwork had introduced to me. As a student, I experienced a complete absence of feminism from international relations until I became curious and started exploring it on my own. While working for the government under the Obama Administration, I saw women and feminism every day in the policies and approaches being taken across federal agencies and within various bureaus. I realized that there was a rift between the theories we were being taught and those that were being acted upon in practice. To close this gap, we need to look to where we learn about different theories, policies, and practices. Secondly, to improve the work being done for women, peace, and security, people need to actually know that the concept exists. Where do theory and praxis meet? In the classroom. How do people find out that things exist? They become curious and then they share their knowledge.

What We Are Taught…

Liberal and realist thought are largely considered the two theories that dominate mainstream IR academia. Both are rooted in three basic ideas: (1) states serve as the key actors in the international system, (2) states are selfish, and (3) the international system is anarchic, meaning that there is no overarching, international authority (Mingst & Toft, 2014; Thayer & Ibryamova, 2010; Waltz, 1979). Where realism and liberalism depart from one another is how to approach and understand state relations. Liberal theorists maintain a fairly positive outlook on human nature and believe that cooperation between states will ultimately create order in the international system (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985; Fukuyama, 1989; Mingst & Toft, 2014). Neoliberal thinkers, such as Michael Doyle (1986), are responsible for popularizing a subdivision of knowledge known as democratic peace theory, which states

that democracies don't go to war with one another (Thayer & Ibryamova, 2010). Inspired by the work of Immanuel Kant (1795), the goal of liberalism is to achieve global peace. For this reason, liberal theory is often critiqued as being in search of what is most ideal or what should be.

In contrast to liberalism, realists claim to present the international system as it exists but are often critiqued for being too pessimistic in doing so. If the main idea of realism had to be summarized in one word, it would be "power." Realism is much more complex than that, of course, but ultimately it is concerned with states, power, and security (Jackson & Sorensen, 1999). It is primarily concerned with the struggle for balance and distribution of power. Hans Morgenthau's (1948) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* served as one of the most seminal works in IR for decades and remains an important text on international politics as a struggle for power (Jackson & Sorensen, 1999). Shortly thereafter, Kenneth Waltz (1959; 1979) offered a neorealist perspective on anarchy and the distribution of power in the international system. Realists focus almost solely on power and structures, rather than individual [state] behavior, to explain outcomes, and tend to advocate for conducting foreign policy without too much of a care for morality (Kennan, 1986). In 1993, Samuel Huntington provided an important perspective on the imminent *Clash of Civilizations,* in which he states, "the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict…will be cultural" (Huntington, 1993, p. 22). Although it's been more than 20 years since the piece was published, it's clear that we are currently experiencing this very clash firsthand.

…And What We Are Not

J. Ann Tickner (2014) asserted that until 1988, "it is safe to say that…the presence of women and gender issues had been completely ignored by the IR discipline" (p. xv). Since then, the field of feminist international relations has gained strength and the attention now being granted to women and gender issues in the international community and foreign affairs is unprecedented. Feminist IR scholars do not seek to completely reinvent the field of international relations. Rather, they ask us to be critical of the knowledge within it "because it is based on assumptions about human nature that are partial and that privilege masculinity" (Tickner, 2014, p. 8). Cynthia Enloe (2004; 2014) became one of the first prominent

feminist scholars in IR and began with a very simple question: "Where are the women?" No one was asking it, but she made the case that we needed to. Since then, a number of feminist scholars (Blanchard 2003; Steans, 2013; Runyon & Peterson 2014; Sylvester, 2001; Tickner, 2014) have entered into IR and offered important knowledge about challenging our understandings of power, security, and protection within the state system because they have been defined absent of the individual and gender relations.

Scholars advocate for disassociating women and femininity with peace when considering international affairs. Much of our language is structured in dichotomies that work in tandem with one another (i.e. male-subject vs. female-object) and support existing power structures. Linking women and femininity to peace (while linking male and masculinity to power) ensures that "female" continues to be seen as soft and weak (and male as hard and strong). Like most feminists, those in IR seek to expose this privileging of masculinity and androcentric ideologies in mainstream academia (Harding, 1986; LeSavoy and Bergeron, 2011; Tickner, 2014). Feminist IR scholars ask us to shift our focus from state to individual and to notice the role that gender has in both inter- and intrastate relations.

Putting Feminist Thought into Practice

In 1995, at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, Hillary Clinton famously declared that "women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights." In *The Hillary Doctrine*, Valerie Hudson and Patricia Leidl (2015) note "linking women to 'hard' national security affairs…was the obvious next step after Beijing" (p. 21). In 1997, then-President Bill Clinton named Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State, which effectively put a female at the helm of the federal agency that manages U.S. foreign policy for the first time ever. In 2000, the United Nations Security Council formally recognized the unique role that women play in peace and security, as well as the adverse effects they tend to suffer in conflict, through Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security. Around this same time, feminist empiricists (Caprioli 2000; Caprioli, 2005; Hudson, Caprioli, Ballif-Spanvill, McDermott, & Emmett, 2008) began conducting quantitative studies that proved that state stability and conflict were inherently linked to gender equality.

Gradually, the Security Council released a number of resolutions clarifying and expanding the scope of their original declaration.[1] Member states were called upon to create country-specific plans on how they intended to implement the women, peace, and security agenda initiatives (United Nations Security Council, 2005, p. 1). In 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, proclaimed, "the status of the world's women is not simply an issue of morality – it is a matter of national security" (Hudson & Leidl, 2015, p. 53). Within one year's time, the Obama administration affirmed this claim and formally committed U.S. foreign policy to advancing women around the world through the launch of the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (Executive Order No. 13,595, 2011).

Federal agencies took this commitment seriously. The Department of State, Department of Defense, and USAID are responsible for leading implementation efforts of the U.S. NAP within our borders and beyond. As the plan states, its "goal is as simple as it is profound: to empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace" (The White House, 2016, p. 2). It focuses on five major themes, national integration and institutionalization, participation in peace processes and decision-making, protection from violence, conflict prevention, and access to relief and recovery (Executive Order No. 13,595, 2011). Some of the most visible products of the NAP can be seen in initiatives through the Office of Global Women's Issues that seek to address women's economic empowerment and education and ending violence against women, as you'll notice in Figure 1. Men and women across government agencies were

Figure 1. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry announces the U.S. global strategy to empower adolescent girls on March 15, 2016 at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. Photo taken by author.

[1] See UNSCR 1820 (2008); UNSCR 1888 (2009); UNSCR 1889 (2009); UNSCR 1960 (2010); UNSCR 2106 (2013); and UNSCR 2122 (2013) for more information.

equally committed to promoting gender equality because they all understood that "the subjugation of women is a threat to the common security of our world" (Hillary Clinton as cited in Hudson & Leidl, 2015, p. 3). Throughout the Obama administration, there was clear evidence of feminist thinking being put into practice, but this work was not emphasized or even discussed in my courses on national security.

Finding the Missing Link

As I thought more about what we are taught and what we are not, I became evermore curious to know if, and how, undergraduate political science and international relations programs in New York State are integrating feminist IR and gendered policies into their courses. In search of some answers, I designed a small research project.[2] I reached out to six comprehensive, public higher education institutions requesting copies of syllabi for national security and foreign policy courses as well as interviews with the professors teaching those courses. Although my sample size was small and my results are only generalizable for the schools that were included, a majority of professors did not include women, gender, or feminism in their courses. In order to address the issue, I needed to also understand professors' reasoning for excluding gendered perspectives. Most of the professors agreed that feminist IR and gendered approaches were too far outside mainstream teaching and curriculum approaches. Participants stated that feminist IR in political science instruction lacks both presence and legitimacy within the field, and that, as a theoretical approach, it is still new and under development. Related to this, they each expressed that there was a lack of available and easily accessible scholarship on the subject matter. All three professors stated that they did not have enough time to teach "the basics" *and* feminist IR or the role of women in security. They also expressed that there simply wasn't enough student interest in the topic to devote significant amounts of time to discussing it.

Responding to Reasons for Exclusion

How can we be interested in something that we don't know exists? That is my

[2] For a more detailed account of the research, please see: Schroeder, T, (2017) "Why Women? Gender Mainstreaming in Undergraduate International Relations Discourse." *Senior Honors Theses*. Senior Honors Theses. 174. http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/honors/174.

response to the final reason cited above. We don't go into our courses knowing what realism and liberalism are or what they each say about the international system. We become curious and take an interest in them once we have been introduced to them. That is what needs to happen with feminist IR; if it were introduced, students would at least have the opportunity to consider it. The main two points that I want to focus on are scholarship and legitimacy. As far as available scholarship is considered, we have to consider it from two different perspectives. To claim that there is not enough scholarship or knowledge on feminist IR and women in security is absolutely false. Feminists have been contributing their perspectives to International Relations through both qualitative and quantitative research for over 30 years and it has been almost two decades since the women, peace, and security agenda was first introduced within international community. As if this is not enough proof of its existence, the U.S. has been integrating feminist ideals into its foreign policy priorities for more than five years and there are even entire research institutes solely devoted to producing knowledge on the role of women in peace, conflict, and security.[3] This body of knowledge is available.

When we consider scholarship that is both available *and* easily accessible, we are faced with a different situation. I want to bring you back to the image of the books at the beginning of this article. When I went looking for textbooks in the security studies section of my college library, I found one pink book titled *Gender in International Relations* (Tickner, 1992). I was able to find other sources in a section devoted specifically to gender and IR, but the rest were located in the women's studies stacks. This is problematic. Feminist IR is as much a theory about IR as any other IR theory, yet it is relegated to gender-specific sections of texts in the library, which further obscures its visibility and reach as important to the IR field. As I explored the available introductory texts on international relations (Mingst & Arreguin-Toft, 2014; Jackson & Sorensen, 1999; Steans & Pettiford, 2001), the missing feminist IR problem goes deeper. Out of these three sample texts, only one (Steans & Pettiford, 2001) gives equal attention to *all*

[3] See Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security and the Institute for Inclusive Security as examples of this.

perspectives and themes of IR theory. Co-author Jill Steans is a leading feminist IR scholar, so this makes sense. The other two texts only mentioned gender in the table of contents or as a heading within a chapter. Jackson and Sorenson (1999) address "gender" as a source of a dissident voice and an alternative approach to IR as an academic subject (p. 59-61). The authors later devote approximately six pages to considering gender as a "New Issue in IR" to international relations (p. 257-262). I would not consider feminism to be a "new issue" today, but, at the time this textbook was written in 1999, it was still a relatively new theoretical approach. I call attention to this because it demonstrates the fact that much of IR continues to rely on outdated knowledge rather than seeking newer, more contemporary thinking.

The textbook by Mingst and Arreguin-Toft (2014) is a more recent publication and still does not mention gender or feminist IR in its table of contents.[4] Rather, readers will come across such topics under alternative approaches, radical perspectives, and in a nifty "you decide" section. This final section is the most problematic of the three because it implies to the reader that they get to decide whether feminist IR is a legitimate body of knowledge. For example, the prompt is: "Assume for the sake of argument that due to systematic exclusion from state leadership opportunities (or female self-selection out of such opportunities) Tickner is right. Would a world led by women be more peaceful?" (Mingst & Arreguin-Toft, 2014, p. 99). The language used by the authors is condescending and treats feminist IR as a joke. The authors suggest that, for the purposes of the exercise, students should assume Tickner's work is credible, but they do not offer any commentary on why students should maintain that belief beyond the prompt. Furthermore, the prompt fails to accurately depict feminist IR theory because it associates women with peacefulness, which is one of the very social constructs that feminist IR scholars encourage us to challenge and disrupt. If introductory textbooks in the discipline chose not to include gender or do so in negative, inaccurate, and surface-level ways, it is valid for

[4] Mingst & Arreguin-Toft recently recently released the 7th edition of this textbook in 2016. The updated version is slightly more inclusive of feminist IR theory.

professors to cite accessible scholarship as a challenge to teaching feminist IR.

The issue with textbooks also speaks to a larger issue in the discipline as a whole. As a discipline, International Relations is incredibly masculine and does not allow very much space for feminism to take hold. It is unfortunately not surprising that feminist IR theory is not considered to be a legitimate field of knowledge because Women and Gender Studies, as a discipline, is often met with skepticism throughout academia. This is especially evident in the latter example of textbooks and in the comments made by the professors in my study. The male participant in my study stated that he preferred "more realist approaches," and that feminist IR is "too idealistic." In other words, this professor values the privileging of, and power conferred to, masculinity in realist theories.

Epistemological issues have been challenging feminist IR scholars for over three decades and are sure to continue into the future (Tickner, 2014). Epistemology is the term given to theories of knowledge and knowledge production (Letherby, 2003, p. 19). When we think of knowledge, we must ask ourselves who has the privilege of creating it, possessing it, and controlling it. Knowledge production has historically "been dominated by patriarchy and men have used their positions of power to define issues, structure language, and develop theory" (Letherby, 2003, p. 20). Because of this, the contributions of feminist researchers and the validity of their work are often called into question. Gayle Letherby (2003) distinguishes between two different types of knowledge – "*authorized knowledge* [or] the knowledge of the academy and *experiential knowledge,"* which can be defined as "the knowledge generated from experience" (p. 20). Men are privileged in the sense that their work is considered to be more legitimate in the eyes of the academy, and consequently, they have greater authority than feminist knowledge that has been derived from lived experiences and constructed outside the patriarchal code.

Why Feminism? Why Now?

For much of history, knowledge within the international relations discipline has been produced by men and for men. Much of this scholarship focuses on war and the state but fails to consider how the individual experience of war and peace affects state security. Feminist perspectives on international

relations, which account for these impact experiences and which suggest that women play critical roles in global politics, are therefore seen as less credible and less legitimate than traditional, male-centered/male-dominated knowledge.

The field of IR also, ironically, neglects to consider the role that colonialism played, and continues to play, in the international system. By focusing only on the state, IR has effectively silenced the voices of the individuals living the reality of what is "state." Postcolonial and transnational feminist thinkers, such as Chandra Mohanty (2003) and Gayarti Spivak (1993), discuss how western feminisms tend to overshadow or silence the experiences and feminism cultivated by women in the developing world. While feminist IR scholars do try to bring these perspectives into the field, postcolonial and transnational thinking provides a unique lens for thinking about the dilemma of feminism within IR as a whole. In her 1988 essay Spivak asks, "Can the subaltern speak?" She considers the ways that western logics have supplanted the local logics (i.e., ways of living, thinking, being, etc.) of individuals living on the margins in the developing world and concludes "the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read" (Spivak, 1988, p. 105). In the field of International Relations, women and feminists are the subaltern. Just as Spivak (1988) says, this perspective cannot be heard or read and, if professors are expecting feminism to enter mainstream theories like realism, it never will be.

During the Obama administration there was a marked commitment to promoting and empowering women both domestically and abroad. Women served as some of President Obama's top advisors (Figure 2) and he explicitly stated that he "made advancing gender equality a foreign policy priority" (Office of the Press Secretary, 2016). Despite the fact that women were present and actively participating in foreign policy decisions for the last eight years, professors were not talking about feminist IR and gender concerns in their national security and foreign policy courses.

Now, we have President Trump. Within his first 100 days, the Trump administration and Republican Congress have made it unbelievably clear that advancing women is not one of their priorities. Rather, it appears to be the exact opposite. This was first made clear only three days into his presidency by signing an Executive Order to reinstate the Mexico City policy, more commonly referred to as the global gag rule. This law prohibits international organizations that provide family planning services from receiving U.S. funding.

Other restrictive measures on women's heath have been passed since, but what remains so jarring about the image of this Executive Order being signed (shown in Figure 3) is the fact that it is a group of white men smiling as they strip women around the world of their ability to access safe healthcare providers. The absence of women in this frame is similar to the absence of feminism in the IR discipline and undergraduate classrooms. Women are nowhere to be seen or heard now. We know, from a variety of empirical feminist studies (Caprioli, 2000; Caprioli, 2005; Hudson et al., 2008), that state stability is inherently linked to gender equality, that states with greater gender equality are more stable. This is precisely why we need feminism in international relations and we need to start paying attention to it now. We need it in our ongoing government

Figure 2. Former President of the United States, Barack Obama, meeting with three of his top advisors in the Oval Office. By Pete Souza, posted February 6, 2017, https://www.instagram.com/p/BQLbcLmBitE/?taken-by=petesouza

Figure 3. Current President of the United States, Donald Trump, signs an Executive Order reinstating the global gag rule surrounded by his advisors on January 23, 2017. From "Trump Reinstates Global Gag Rule to Cut Off Family Planning Funds Abroad." by Becca Andrews, 2017, http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/01/trump-global-gag-rule

operations, and we need it to be introduced in political science and international studies undergraduate courses.

A Call for Curiosity

Over the last year, Margaret Atwood's (1985) *The Handmaid's Tale* has become remarkably popular and relevant again. When asked if the dystopian novel was written as a prediction for what was to come in American society, Atwood (2017) responded that it wasn't. Rather, she said that she wrote it in the hopes that "if this future can be described in detail, maybe it won't happen" (Atwood, 2017, p. 6). The society she describes is governed by the subjugation of women, religious tyranny, and totalitarianism (Atwood, 2017). Unfortunately, these oppressions are becoming all too familiar in contemporary America. Our responses to these forces are somewhat different but also somewhat similar to those of the people of Gilead. Just as in Gilead, some American citizens do not realize what is currently taking shape behind closed doors in Washington, D.C. In Gilead, "there wasn't even any rioting in the streets. People stayed home at night, watching television, looking for some direction" (Atwood, 1985, p. 174). In America today, there are a number of people taking to the streets to advocate for rights and protections of all, but there are equally as many just sitting at home accepting and not questioning what's going on around them. Beyond the reasons given in official statements and through different media outlets, many have stopped asking why; we've stopped being curious. Feminist IR scholar Cynthia Enloe (2004) wrote about becoming "more and more curious about curiosity and its absence" (p. 2). She said that in becoming curious about something, we must also confront our previous lack thereof. And what we find, as Enloe states, is that "so many power structures – inside households, within institutions, in societies, in international affairs – are dependent on our continuing lack of curiosity" (p. 3). It is for that reason, that I conclude this paper with a call for curiosity.

Students, the time has come to be curious about the education you are receiving. I want you to invest in an exploration of your education and ask questions like what is missing, who is being silenced, and why are certain groups absent from what I am learning? Conduct your own research, advocate for your interests, and make your voices heard.

Professors of mainstream IR theories and approaches, I call upon you to become curious about feminist IR theory and the role of women and gender in the field. Seek out research by feminist scholars; consider how your own language and research is gendered; recognize the ways that gender is a prominent factor in government practices and policies. I want you to attend the sessions on feminism and gender when you go to annual conferences for your discipline and, most importantly, I want you to be curious about your students. Give them the chance to consider feminism as one of the many perspectives on international relations.

Feminist IR scholars, this is a call to become curious about new ways of being curious. Start asking why you are not being included and represented fairly in textbooks; consider ways you can move out of the safety of your feminist circles and into less accepting spaces where your voices are needed the most. Continue to penetrate the mainstream; do not give up.

Textbook editors and publishers, I call on you to become curious about equal representation of *all* theories. Ask why and where feminist IR and gender is missing; do not allow the legitimacy of feminist knowledge to be up for debate if you are not going to do the same with all other theories.

To those in our government agencies, become curious about academics. Reach outside your immediate circles to better understand the knowledge being produced by scholars and then share how your policies align with or differ from their theories and research. Consider ways to connect with American higher education institutions and help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

This is a call for *everyone* to challenge commonly held perceptions and seek new ones; to question the power dynamics that are operating between individuals and within the state system; to not fear feminism or women having a voice in the study or practice of foreign affairs; to not let the bastards grind you into a state of complacency.

This is a call to everyone to make America curious again.

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